Standardizing Competency Assessment

LTC Kimberly Armstrong

Chief, Army Nurse Professional Development Branch

AMEDD C&S

Why Standardize Competency Assessment?

- Competency is among the "Top Ten" for Type 1 findings across the nation
- No national standard available
- Inconsistency between JCAHO surveyors
- In the absence of guidance, devote tremendous energy & resources to create new tools
- No centralized approach to assess competency across the organization
- Staff turnover inhibits the institutionalism of a process that may take years to become part of organizational culture…

Why Standardize Competency Assessment? *Continued…*

- Improves efficiency and productivity
  - Reduces “re-inventing the wheel”
  - Can use those resources for other projects
  - Promotes patient safety
- Corporate compliance
  - Shows JCAHO that we’ve taken a corporate approach to assessing competency
  - Consistency between organizations/MTFs in language and concept

What is Orientation?

- **Orientation:** Mandatory process for providing new staff with initial training and information relevant to the organization (philosophy, goals, policies), worksite, job position. This is a process that includes the following:
  - **Inprocessing**
  - **Orientation to the organization, department, unit**
  - **Initial Competency Assessment**

What is Competency?

- **Competency:** The effective application of those technical skills and knowledge that the individual must possess in order to perform their duties. Competency communicates an acceptable level of practice and may be evaluated using a variety of methods
  - **Initial Competency Assessment**
  - **Ongoing Competency Assessment**

What is Competency Assessment?

- A fluid and ongoing process that articulates and evaluates the skills needed to carry out a particular job now and in the future. It should reflect the dynamic nature of the job and help work groups focus on the philosophy and mission of the organization.
- What exactly are we assessing?
  - ***Psychomotor/technical/clinical skills***
  - ***Decision making/critical thinking skills***
  - ***Interpersonal skills***

What is Competency Verification?

- The process by which a responsible individual measures the abilities of an individual for a specific job element or skill.
- Verification can and should take many forms as a single method of verification can never effectively capture the technical, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills required to successfully perform the job.

Methods of Verifying Competency

- Observation or demonstration
- Post-tests
- Case Studies
- Exemplars
- Peer Review
- Discussion Groups
- Presentations
- Mock events
- Performance Improvement Monitors

When is Competency Evaluated?

- **During the hiring process**
  - Do they meet the qualifications for the job?
- **At the end of the orientation/preceptorship**
  - Did they successfully complete orientation requirements and the assessment checklist?
- **On an ongoing basis throughout the year**
  - Are they performing well within scope of practice?
- **At the end of the rating period**
  - Formalized with a performance appraisal
  - Ongoing Competency Assessment

What are Initial Competencies?

- Competencies that focus on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required in the first six months to one year of employment.
- Assessed using the ***competency assessment checklist*** currently being shared with all MTFs
- Examples of checklists (to edit for your facility and unit) are found at Enterprise Consultancy **https://akm.amedd.army.mil/competency**

Standardized Template

Initial Competency Assessment Tool

- Six column format that includes the following:
  - Required Competency or Skill
  - Self Assessment
  - Orientation (preceptor initials & date)
  - Evaluation Method
  - Competency Validated by Supervisor (signature)
  - Comments/Additional Resources
- Integrates the following
  - Age, language, cultural, and religious competencies
  - Technical, cognitive, and interpersonal domains as applicable to the skill Required Competency or skill
  - Scope of practice

What is Ongoing Competency Assessment?

- Competencies that build on established knowledge, skills, and abilities. These competencies reflect new, changing, high-risk, and problematic aspects of the job as it evolves overtime.
- Selected competencies are reviewed on an annual basis

Standardized Template

***Ongoing* Competency Assessment Tool**

- Four column format that includes the following:
  - Competency or Skill
  - Method of Verification
  - Dates of training/skill verification
  - Reason for Selection
    - High volume/problem prone
    - Low volume/high risk
    - Required competency
    - Identified as part of department monitoring system
    - Identified as part of performance improvement monitors
    - Identified through a needs assessment
    - New change in mission/practice
- Tool completed on an annual basis

What is the Head Nurse's Role?

- Help colleagues/staff understand concepts and impact on patient safety!!
- Verify staff competency
  - New staff complete a thorough orientation program
  - Revalidate competencies of existing staff
- Design your unit's competency tool
- Maintain Competency Assessment Files (CAFs)
  - Review contents with quarterly counseling
  - Implement "leave" policy
- Tie Ongoing Assessment with performance evals

Do You Have Questions?

LTC Kimberly K. Armstrong

Department of Nursing Science

AMEDD C&S

471-6073 (DSN)

(210) 221-6073 (Com)

kimberly.armstrong@amedd.army.mil